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LECTURE INTRODUCTORY

TO HIS

COURSE OF LECTURES

FOR 1843-4.

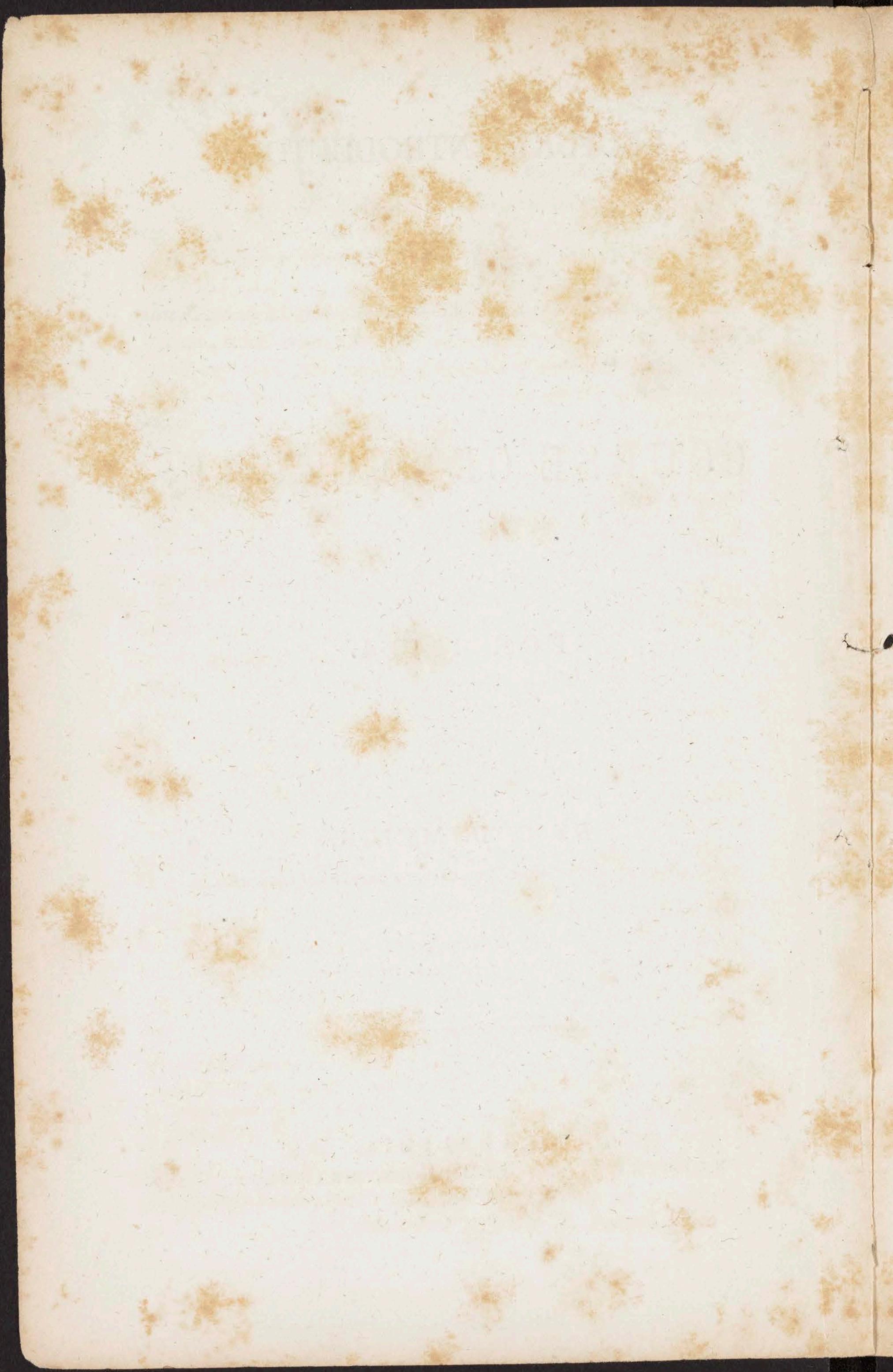
BY C. D. MEIGS,

PROF. MID. AND DIS. OF WOM. AND CHIL. IN JEFF. MED. COLL. PHILAD.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 20th, 1843.

Professor C. D. MEIGS, M. D.

DEAR Sir,— At a meeting of the students of Jefferson Medical College, Nov. 14, 1843, W. W. TOWNSEND, of Pa., in the chair, J. F. MILLER, of Ala., was elected secretary, and the undersigned were appointed a committee to address you in behalf of the Class, requesting a copy of your very excellent Introductory Lecture for publication; of which, Sir, they cannot avoid expressing to you their high admiration; and their assurance, on listening to its delivery, in your *own* and peculiar style, of the happy election that called you to the charge of your branch in this school.

Accept, Sir, assurances of the high regard and esteem of
of your Class.

W. A. BOYD, N. C.
C. H. BRESSLER, Philada.
W. J. WOODS, S. C.
FREDERIC ROBIE, Me.
OLIVER B. KNODE, Md.
JOHN S. CARPENTER, Pa.
THOS. A. GRAVES, Geo.
W. L. ANTHONY, Ala.
JOHN S. BAYN, Va.
S. G. BAILEY, N. Y.
S. S. DANA, N. H.
H. C. JOHNS, Ohio.
SILAS S. BROOKS, Mass.
BENJ. A. ALLISON, Ind.
JOHN B. DRAUGHON, La.
JOHN W. CARDEN, Tenn.
E. G. DESNOYERS, Mich.
A. MARTIN, Ky.
S. F. FISLER, N. J.
H. K. W. BOARDMAN, Conn.
THOS. M. FERGUSON, Canada.
J. C. NEVES, South America.
J. VON BRITTON, West Indies.
S. EMANUEL, Miss.
J. C. COLVAN, Del.
G. E. OUTHIT, Nova Scotia.

S. G. BAILEY, N. Y., Sec. Committee.

PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 20th, 1843.

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour to acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of your communication of this date.

Permit me to assure you of the grateful sense I have of the kind consideration of the Class; with whose wishes, as to my Introductory Lecture, I am happy to comply.

I am, gentlemen, with the greatest respect,

Your obliged friend and servant,

CH. D. MEIGS.

To Messrs. Wm. A. BOYD, Ch. H. BRESSLER, Wm. J. Woods, &c. &c.

INTRODUCTORY.

Gentlemen of the Medical Class, it is my purpose to ask your attention this evening to some observations on the medical profession—viewed in the light of its power, and its obligations; its power to benefit mankind by its ministry—its obligations upon all those who enter upon the study and practice of it, with a right spirit and understanding.

My province in this college, is to teach the Principles and Practice of Midwifery; but, to the professorship I havethe honour to hold, is added the further duty, of addressing instruction to the classes upon the diseases of women and children. This is a most obvious and extensive department of medical instruction, the administration of which gives the chair a wide, extended supervision over a variety of affections, both medical and chirurgical; as well as over an interesting and useful part of physiology and anatomy.

It may be that some of my respected auditors will look upon me as too arrogant, in assuming in this introductory discourse, to speak generally upon the medical profession; and would rather, that confining myself within the rigorous limits of a mere specialty in medicine, I should adhere to, and treat of that alone. But I have already addressed to the classes of this institution two discourses that have been printed, on the subject of midwifery proper, so that it seems needless to go over the ground a third time; and I must, on this occasion, beg gentlemen to bear in mind what I just now said as to the very great scope of my department. Indeed! am not I a physician? Is there not laid upon me the obligation to treat all sorts of maladies to which the persons whose nature I study are obnoxious; inflammations, fevers, neuroses, surgical accidents and disorders? Am I not daily bound to make and describe the most difficult diagnoses with a nice and painful discrimination? and ought I not then

to know, whether I do or not, all the great principles and shadowy modifications of an universal therapia? I might ask you who are the women and children, if they are not three-fourths of all the population, and whether, as a teacher here, it is not incumbent upon me to know and teach their anatomical and pathological peculiarities, of which, indeed, I cannot avoid speaking in my public lectures? My department proper has long been looked upon as the least important one of the art, and has lingered far behind that of the surgeon, the practitioner, and the anatomist: but now it has taken its equal station among them, and in many respects justly claims to rank even with the highest; this makes me not a mere accoucheur, but a physician, and a physiologist; under which title I claim to speak to you of my profession, its power, and its obligations.

I gladly avail myself of this occasion to speak to you on topics that are not often broached in introductory lectures. I think, perhaps I may err, that many inadequate and very hurtful opinions are held, not by the people only, but by physicians themselves, as to the nature of our calling; and you will remember, gentlemen, that in the introductory discourses you have recently heard here, very frequent allusions have been made to the revolutions of our science, the uncertainty of its facts, and the futility of the deductions that have been made from them. I need go no farther, then, than to your very recent recollections, for evidence that medicine has been the subject of frequent and loud condemnation on this account—of its uncertainty. Now, I must say, that it is to me a most surprising thing, that the people should know so little about us as they evidently do, seeing that we live in the closest intimacy with them—far beyond what the other learned professions can boast. It might, *a priori*, be thought they should, by this time, know what it is that physicians can do for them, and what they have a right to ask at their hands. Yet far from this, the majority of them quite misunderstand our mission in the world, and claim, what we neither can give, nor pretend to give,

though they have seen us, and looked in our old familiar faces these two thousand years : they never have lived without physicians among them, and they never will be able to dispense with our skill and our attentions in any state of society, civilized or savage. The most erroneous views are held of us even in the intellectual classes of society, and of those who are not well informed, how vast is the number who confidently approach us to seek, not our counsel, but a cure—not a sagacious recommendation of a prudent method, but an unconditional rescue from impending death—not a prescription, but a masterful abrogation, in their behalf, of the law of nature and the will of God.

If, indeed, gentlemen, we had set ourselves up to this height of impudent boasting, the charge might well lie at the door. But we have never made any such bold claims to power. It is the fault either of the people themselves to believe us possessed of these powers—or it is the fault of the venders of nostrums, who advertise, with supreme audacity, their ability not only to relieve the distressed, but to cure, absolutely and unconditionally, (except for the consideration,) all the possible forms that disease may assume—even the most hideous and mortal forms of cancer or consumption. As we have no means of protecting ourselves against their intrusion, we are compelled to stand cheek by jowl with them, in the eyes of the people, and bear on our own shoulders the burthensome load of defamation, which, as applied to physicians, is a libel, but to them is the mere sober truth.

We are greatly injured by the superstitious credulity of mankind on the subject of medicine and its powers ; a credulity which not only delivers them blindfold into the hands of rapacious quacks and charlatans, but exposes us to the insulting sneer of the uncertainty of our art, the vagueness of its purposes and processes, the revolutions it frequently undergoes,—and which, moreover, taxes her with the multitudinous proofs of her incapacity to arrest of his stroke—him, who once and for all of us, *must* come to

stand before us, with his mortal emblems in his hands. I complain that we are misunderstood, I complain that the people look for more power at our hands than hath ever been, or ever can be, deposited in them. For surely if they knew us, as we know ourselves, they would seek for no greater benefits than those we *can* dispense, nor charge us with a weakness and incompetency which we have never denied. All that I desire is simply this: that we should be appreciated for what we are, and for no more, and for no less.

Gentlemen, is it inevitable for our beautiful and ancient and beneficial philosophy to be so misapprehended, and ever regarded as a mystery far beyond our power to master it, and still further above the comprehension of the people?

Let us inquire.

If we consider the natural constitution of the race of man, we shall see it frail and feeble, both in its moral and physical aspects. The moment he enters upon the stage of existence, man is attacked by numerous powers that tend to destroy him; so that, from the first breath he draws, or the first leap of his heart, he is in instant and pressing conflict with the causes of destruction, whose arrows fly unseen at noon-day, and ever attack and wound him till, by the decadence of years, or the intervention of accident or disease, he brings his bosom to the last throb—and then the fight is over; it is so with every man that comes into the world. These pernicious agents perpetually expose him to maladies, many of which find an easy cure in remedies, the knowledge of the nature and application of which constitutes a great item in the sum of human happiness; happiness which is impossible in disease, and which finds its term in death.

Now to study out the nature of these diseases is a long study, and to learn the use of these remedies is a long art—an impossible acquisition for the generality. It must be a special study and pursuit; it must be an art, a business, a calling, a profession. The mass cannot give themselves to it—they

are busy elsewhere. Some to the chase—some to the pasture—some to the field—some are busied with the shuttle—some with the engine—some sail on the high seas to bring from distant ports the productions of other industries, other arts, other skill, other climes—for some the weary lamp expires only with the dawn—some wield the battle blade—some point the dreadful gun. Men are a busy, busy race—necessarily so, since the fiat fell upon them, that in the sweat of their brow they should eat their bread.

Medicine, like other pursuits, must then be a distinct profession. What an honourable one! To belong to it gives the privilege to know the nature of man, physical and intellectual, in health and sickness. It is to be appointed the conservators of the knowledge of man's nature, and to aid in transmitting from age to age with perpetual augmentations, the knowledge of all the agents that change, and reform and improve, and protract and protect his existence, his life itself. The medical art is one of man's necessities. Its power to benefit him hath been recognised from generation to generation; among the most barbarous hordes, in the remotest villages, amidst courts and palaces, the daily ministrations of the physician are performed, and this from the remotest times.

When Podalirius and Machaon enjoyed the enviable confidence of the heroes of the Iliad assembled under the walls of Troy, is there any doubt that the pestilence and wounds of that famous plain were shorn of much of their mortal violence and terror by the sons of Æsculapius, those ministers of health. From that day to the present hour—from Cos to the high Pergamenian—from Rome to the courts of the Abassides—from the sage of Aquapendente to the philosopher of Gottingen—to the Bordeus, the Hunters, the Hufelands, the Solayres, the Sydenhams Rushes and Velpeaus, hath not our medical philosophy run a race, both swift and strong, and hath our noble science borne indeed, a banner so long in the world, that its very hues should not be known to day? Shall all the truth and

power gathered from so many gifted minds in so long a record, be viewed as superhuman on the one hand, or on the other as fruitless, uncertain and wavering? Whence then the credulity of some, the distrust and contempt of others, and the prevalent misunderstanding of our true nature, in the whole world?

Gentlemen, some of the very earliest fruits of our medical philosophy, are, like the first beautiful imaginings of the arts of poetry and eloquence and architecture, so nigh to perfection, that like them, they cannot be improved, nor even imitated now. How do we admire and feel astonished at the power of genius, when we behold its fruits in the glories of the Parthenon, or in the enchanting productions of the Grecian chisel, "No man hath seen me; how then thou, O, Praxiteles?" Such was an epigraph for the Medicanean statue; that divine conception of exquisite, perfect, immortal youth and beauty. The Homeric Epic, and its felicitous imitation, the *Aeneid*, are each the productions of the early but full grown and manly powers of the mind; which *started* into existence and *leaped* to immortality, so to speak, with the very birth of Poesy. These, though we admire them, for their intrinsic excellence, we admire them the more, as so unexpected, so sudden, so like the conceptions of a superhuman understanding; as the archetypes of all that shall follow.

But these things that belong to the world! Are they more admirable than the works of [the father of medicine; works that belong not to the world, for the world knows them not, and never can know them; but to us, to whom they have been bequeathed from a time-honoured ancestry; to us, physicians, ministers appointed to be the protectors, the solace and hope of thousands, yea, of millions of our fellow-mortals, who, ignorant of their natures, and their wants, could not dispense with the science and the skill so necessary for them, yet so unattainable, except by the means of a separate, a distinct profession.

To us, I say, hath enured the benefit of the rich legacy

of a *Founded Science*. What a wonderful capacity, that of the Coan sage! what deep, profound observation of the inner workings of the recondite life causes! what perfect discrimination among the tenebrous confusion of the vital phenomena ! What foresight like prophecy! Made too, in an age when no glimpse was yet obtained of the Harvean invention. Long before Pecquet, or Rudbeck, or Aselli ever lived; or ever Chemistry had come, the Ithuriel of Nature, to touch as with a celestial spear, her sleeping and amorphous mass, *rudis indigestaque moles*—that like the foul and ugly toad that lay, sleeping by Eve in Eden, she should start into form and feature, and declare herself to us as she is and what she is—great, beautiful. Long before Ehrenberg, and Schleiden, and Barry, and Von Baer, had opened to us the portals of a new world of analysis, wherein we may behold the consecutive steps of evolution from the rudimental cyloblast, the mother-cell, up to the complete edification and constitution of all the organisms of this most wonderful microcosm. Hippocrates, gentlemen, is the great paradigm of medical men. He founded us as on a rock. His productions, seeing the immense difficulty of the task, are among the most surprising results of intellectual capacity and toil. This I say, not as animated by a sudden enthusiasm—but as speaking what is confirmed by the sober voice of ages. How can I doubt, when in its very day spring, our philosophy could endow itself with such power—how can I doubt its truth, its power, its benificence, when I reflect upon the rich addition to its stores, that have been so long accumulating.

Those who have abused us as a body commonly cast upon us the reproach of being a conjectural people. They have iterated, and reiterated the charge—the uncertainty of medicine. In what respect are we conjectural? Is the husbandman conjectural when he casts the seed upon the bosom of the earth in season, that it may be sure of the early and the latter rain? Who shall make sure the gallant

Argosie, that she shall “not scatter all her spices upon the stream, and strew the roaring waters with her silks.” Is the advocate ever sure as to the jury ballot; or can the politician foreknow the direction of the political bubble, as it floats on the breath of the giddy multitude? Who is he that can lift the veil that ever recedes before the hurried feet of time, to see what rests behind its awful folds? Who can over leap the present in order to anticipate the future? Uncertainty! yes, uncertainty and doubts rest upon all the future of the sons of men. But on that account to single out our art as conjectural is to malign and libel the great, wise, and good men who have devoted their lives to its study and practice. The certainty of medicine is so great as to satisfy the reasonable and dispassionate judgment of its enlightened followers, as contributing, in the highest degree, to the melioration of man’s necessitous state. Even its maligners admit this, and Petrarch himself, amidst the unmeasured obloquy of his famous invectives, commends to his patron Clement the VI. a physician, “Scientia et fide conspicuum.” Such an one, and none other, is a physician. Who is it that is bold enough to contend, that notwithstanding the fluctuations of fashion, the rise and fall of theories, and what is called revolutions in medicine, there have not been from the earliest time to the present, men devoted to it, whose usefulness to their fellow creatures, was great as that which may be boasted by the highest dignitaries of our art in the nineteenth century! Let history show their power and greatness—it is written, and the names of Hippocrates himself—of Celsus, of Aræteus, of Fernel, Riverius and Sydenham, are sufficient for the reply.

What is it that we may claim to have done? Are we not in full possession of a most minute special, and a most philosophical general anatomy? Are not the physiological functions clearly made known? Is not the amount of pathological information vast, accurate, and available for the treatment—our *materia medica*, is it not admirable for the order, neatness, and efficacy of its constituents? In the treatment

of an immense range of maladies, is not the success equal to any reasonable expectation? Do we not feel and know that we daily rescue, yes, rescue, the victims of disease from suffering, and pluck them from danger—and have we not reason to rejoice in the powers of a ministry so beneficent, although the dream of the Rosycrucian can never be fulfilled, nor an elixir of immortality be ever looked for to nullify the law of our nature, which is but dust, and must return to dust. Physicians do not take into their hands as a deposit the great gift of life, under contract to restore it—on penalty of indictment for breach of trust. All that we pretend to is, that we are able, in a vast majority of the cases committed to our care, to give such counsel, and order such methods as may prevent, or remedy the derangement of the bodily functions introduced and maintained by the causes of disease.

We know what it is we can do. It is the people who look to us for more than we pretend to offer, when they come to us to buy health at a price.

The cure of a disease in reality means the care of it. A precise analogy exists between the power of the minister of religion and the minister of health. Does the cure of souls devolve upon him, a weak and frail worm, the responsibility of restoring to the fold those, who incurably wicked, and steeped in iniquity, would not believe though one should arise from the dead? His sole responsibility is honestly and faithfully to discharge his functions according to an enlightened conscience. So with us—we will make no contract of restoration; that is beyond both the power and the conscience. We should say, or be understood to say, “you are disordered, your malady depends upon such or such a cause, its tendencies are of such or such a nature. It is evident you are not possessed of the means or information necessary for your government under the circumstances. There are certain things that it is expedient for you to do, and others that you are carefully to avoid doing. I can, and will, if you please, counsel you as to both. The result

of the malady with which you are affected cannot be fore-known. There is great probability that it will be favourable if you act wisely; whereas, an injudicious method might aggravate, and even render it fatal. For the most part, the treatment of such a case, may be confidently resorted to as means of restoration." How can it be otherwise with a physician thoroughly disciplined, and informed in the use of all the resources for such a service—who hath garnered all that hath been heretofore learned of his art, into a mind sharpened by long practice, clear, logical, its perceptive faculties enhanced and strengthened by long use of them in this sole direction, with enthusiasm, for years.

Is it supposable that such an one could come into the presence of a sick man without discerning, by a sort of intuition almost, what is wrong in his system, what is wanting for the treatment! Or if, in an obscure affection, he should encounter some difficulty at first, what shall he do in the case? He knows that there are three great vital functions on which are dependant both life and death—those of the brain, the heart, and the lungs. Life rests on this tripod; and if, like the Energumene of Delphi, she will give no response elsewhere, the truth can always be extorted from her here. Force her to take this position, and then, no matter what throes of pain, what writhing convulsions, what stolid silence may have barred out the truth, her responses may be wrung from her reluctant lips. She cannot conceal them in the remotest recess or cavern over which you have sought her vaticinations.

The true diagnosis is almost never impossible. The diagnosis by exclusion can discover the secret, whatever rare and strange disguise it may assume. Ask the senses—it is not there. The intellection—no! The respiration—the circulation—the chylopoiesis—the articulations—weigh the rate and power of each separate function, and can nature's secret escape your inquisition? and then your power! The constitution of the blood—can you not augment or lessen its crasis? The calorific powers—can you heighten or

lower them? When the blood flies like a boiling torrent along the tubes, or dashes, with the force of a projectile, against the organs, to demolish and rend them to pieces, you can often guide it at will, and with your lenient hand mitigate and soothe it in its wildest moods. You can do all this, gentlemen, and yet the law of nature remains ever imperative. Among the thousands who languish and appeal to you for succour, some there must be, who, touched with an immedicable lesion, are hastening to the narrow house appointed for all the living. Are these the opprobria of our art? or does it not truly gather some of its highest triumphs where, instead of abandoning to the sharpness of remediless pain, it knows how to protract and to console the inevitable hour, to smooth the pillow of the dying, and make the precipice of the dark, the gloomy grave, a gentle decline, and a smoother way?

How unjust, then, to charge upon us the inefficacy of our science! I repeat it, that it is not our fault to claim too much. No true physician goes to the house of the sick man with offers of restoration in his hands. No; he feels that he enters that dwelling as a minister of God, who, by his grace, had enabled him to *learn* the long lesson of the wisdom of ages; to disentangle and unroll the concatenated web of life; to pursue and detect it in its most secret crypts and channels, and extort thence the confession of the principles by which the organisms both exist and *consist*, and by which is carried on this wondrous frame. Not only hath he studied out, with pains-taking, the arrangement and use of each fine and delicate tube, of each attenuated thread; but he has pondered on their co-workings when aggregated into the consistence and form of organs, each under the law of its normal delimitation. This hath a law of life different from the other, and is sentient under agents that awaken no vital reaction elsewhere. And now, when the accumulation of the seekings of the learned and the good for ages is full—when the fruits of deep invention, and the revelations of fortunate accidents, and the whole sum of the vul-

gar knowledge of medicine, vast as that is, is grasped in his hands, shall it be pretended that his art is conjectural, his prescription an hypothesis, and his cure a chance medley?

Let me repeat, in another form, observations I have already made a few minutes ago.

When I am called to visit a person lying ill of some dangerous malady, I say to him, or I conceive that I am understood to say to him, words to the following effect:

“Sir, your life is in danger of being lost, for thousands of lives are lost under circumstances apparently similar to those in which you are placed. Tens of thousands, on the other hand, have been rescued from danger equally imminent. Should you accept of my aid, and abide by my prescription, it is not in my power to say what will be the success of my efforts in your behalf. Both you and I, sir, are blind and erring mortals ; and to both of us, to you already sick, and to me, here in good health, is the will of heaven, as to the length of our days a closed, a sealed book. I can, and I do, with an honest purpose, offer to advise you in this present strait, with a sincere desire to do you good, and to see you delivered from this great danger. I am sure that I know perfectly well what is the duty of a physician in the case. I will carefully and wisely administer such remedies as may be required, or attainable. Let the event prove whether there be remedies in the world that are capable of modifying the disorders that are now perverting your health, and tending to disorganize and destroy your body. You know my character, my pretensions, my right to your confidence. Judge you, sir, whether I am worthy to be entrusted with so important an interest ; important in the last degree to yourself, your family and your friends. Decide now ; if there be any one found more worthy of this high trust, call that person, and let me go away.”

If now, gentlemen, after such an understanding of his position, and such a clear definition of mine, I should treat

that patient unsuccessfully, but with an honest intention, and according to rules and by means sanctioned by both reason and practice, how can I ever be accused of exercising an art that is conjectural—or be told that my science, my skill, my resources are incompetent. Incompetent! In a thousand such cases, the visible, the undeniable effects of my ministry would be shown in his restoration to health. Incompetent! Yes incompetent to bar out the will of Providence. Why, gentlemen, it is God Almighty's work to decide the fate of all men. It is not for an humble worm; it is not for such as I to say, I will control that wonderous work of man; I will take heed that the thousand strings of this divine instrument shall each be attuned to the song of life! Of LIFE! Life emanates from the throne of God. He is the author and the giver, and the sustainer of life. Man's breath is in his nostrils. He springeth up as a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth away as a shadow and continueth not. Earth to earth—ashes to ashes—dust to dust.

I knew a learned and wise German physician, of immense experience and power; upon every prescription that he wrote, was this superscription—mit huelfe Gottes; and the venerable Ambrose Paré, the good old Ambrose, when he tells us of the sicknesses and wounds committed to his care, in the long wars of his time, under the Kings of France, and tells us of this gallant cavalier, or that noble gentleman, who was sore wounded in the mêlée, ends his relation with the words: “I dressed him, and God healed him.”

Yes, gentlemen, when you administer, it is God that shall heal the sick. It is the *same* parent of *all* life, by whose will it is that the tender herb rises in the spring time from the unfettered and dissolving soil; he lifts up her slender stem into the thin air, and clothes her head with the yellow grain that is destined to wave in our golden harvest fields; every fragrant flower, each unfolding blos-

som, every blushing fruit, is but another manifestation of the all pervading *Life-cause*, centered in and returning to him alone. "*Igneus est ollis vigor, et cœlestis origo seminibus.*" The swallow twittering in the straw built shed, the grim condor, wheeling his slow flight far, far above the cold glaciers of the loftiest Cordilleras; the myriad insects that sport in the evening sun beam—the infusory tribes, with their mantles of gold, and sapphire, and emerald, and ruby, and topas; the tiniest minnow in the shallowest brook; and the gigantic mysticetus that dashes aside the greatest billows of the sea, are all animated by one and the same vital principle, referrible to the divine power and goodness alone.—He sends it out like the swift lightning, to **FLASH** in the free spaces he hath created, and quickly withdraws it that it may no more be seen of mortal eyes. Or, he sets it up a blazing shechinah, to burn gloriously as the light of mankind; or he commissions it where it shall draw out a long and starry train, as it moves among the orbs, or rushes among the spheres, and from its horrid hair shakes pestilence and war, while all eyes are turned to look upon its bright and beautiful coruscations. Life proceeds from the great, first, last *Life-cause*. But we are able to modify, to change, to protect, and even protract it, as we are also capable to control the powers of gravitation, of magnetism, and of the chemical affinities.

Even the humble bee, by an instinct surer than reason, knows how to change the whole organization of its race, by presenting a kind of food, which elevates into the higher functions of a male or female, one that would otherwise have remained destitute of such faculties and become a mere worker. What is it that the skill of man and the power of nature is unequal to?

So great is the power of our art that mankind acknowledge it by universal consent. They have a credulous and superstitious regard for it. It is this prevalent belief, that induces them to support a horde of pretenders and

charlatans, who avail themselves of the weakness of the vulgar to make a trade of what should be a high ministry, and have no further interest in misfortune than as it advances the consumption of the nostrum. Would the people be so misled if they could really know them as they are, and as we are? Why, then, do we leave them in ignorance of our real nature? It is because we are unreformed of the semi-barbarism from which our art emerged long ago, but in some of the vestments of which we still clothe ourselves. At the dawn of letters in Europe every learned man was a sort of miracle—medicine was a mystery, it was allied to divination, and there was necromancy in it. It was the day of the horoscope, the Rosycrucian—the transmuter. It was the day when the elixir of life was sought for in the firmest faith and hope. Notwithstanding her rapid strides, science has not yet left behind the strong impress of the credulosity and mystery of an early age, and the fault is ours.

We have disdained to explain to the people the nature and reasons of our actions. We have compelled them to a mute reliance upon our dicta, and when they are obliged to ask our aid they must surrender at discretion, and having passed under the yoke they have learned nothing, except that medicine is an enigma too difficult for their solution. So, when the nostrum-monger makes a long parade of his farrago, they take it upon an ignorant and foolish faith, yet a faith, after all, in the power of *our* art, and *our* power.

We are greatly in want of a happy reform in this particular. There is a senseless and unmeaning reluctance to permit the patient to know what is to be done for him, and I have even been enjoined in consultations to refrain from any explanations of the action proposed, or of the nature of the remedies in use. Now, as our medical agents do not act upon the phantasy, but on the stomach and bowels of the patient,—and as it is no part of our function to use any jugglery in practice, I should, for my own part, always prefer that my whole purpose, wishes, and expectations, with

their liability to disappointment, should be known. And I feel sure, that it would be for the better if the practice could exist among us of unveiling our art completely, and showing it as it is ; truthful, powerful, beneficent, sure as possible. If the fifteen thousand medical gentlemen in the United States, endowed as they are with the fruits of education—intellectual men—men of probity, learned in all the wisdom and philosophy of our science, and having close, intimate professional relation with at least twelve millions of the people, if they could be induced to give all such information upon their art as might readily be imparted, in the daily exercise of it, the people would soon clearly understand and appreciate us. They would learn to discriminate between us and the charlatans who now plunder and impose upon them. Do you say that your art is a mystery ! it is too deep for the people ! Not so—it is no mystery—it is mere solid, useful, understandable knowledge.

You complain of quackery—you appeal to the Legislature to protect the unwitting people from so great an evil ; the Legislature cannot help you. Your persecution, your contempt, your ridicule, are equally vain in opposition. Take the beam out of your own eye, and then you shall see to take the mote out of your brother's eye. Lay aside all false pretences—teach the 12,000,000, with whom you come into frequent contact, the *true* nature of your mission in the world ; and when they know its power and its truth, they will feel the same respect for it that you do yourselves, and then quackery will fall by its own inertia ; it will be weighed in the balance with true science, and will always kick the beam. Science is always pure, always true, always of good report. Ignorance and falsehood can acquire vogue only by assuming the disguise of science, and wearing the symbols of truth. Let us take, then, the beam out of our own eye, by laying aside all mystery and form, and teach the twelve millions how little it is that we can do for them, aye, and how much—how very much !

Do you still say that the people cannot understand? It is even possible for us to convince the young; I had almost said, babes and sucklings. Let me prove it by an example.

Some time since, a fine boy was dangerously ill with pertussis, complicated with furious pneumonia. It would be difficult to find a sample of a person who had so great an aversion to the use of the lancet, the very thought of which was panic, and the name of it terror, for him. I had refrained from proposing it as a remedy, longer than was prudent, on this very account; but at length was obliged to communicate my wishes to his parents, who were shocked at my proposal, on account of their knowledge of his feelings upon this point, but yet gave a reluctant assent, and began to speak to him upon the subject. The proposal was followed by a most violent ebullition indeed; his agitation was manifested by screams, and an expression of countenance indicating the greatest terror. His cries brought on paroxysms of the cough, that were frightful; and the more they urged, and commanded, and persuaded him by turns, the more did he become dangerously excited. Fatigued at last with the scene, I said to them, if you will be seated, and allow me to speak to your son, I am sure I can obtain his consent. It is impossible; you can never persuade him, sir. It is out of the question to persuade him. I don't wish to persuade, I wish only to convince him. I supposed they thought my attempt a ridiculous one, but they took their seats, and the chamber was still. When the child had had a little time for composure, I approached him and said, —, give me your hand. I won't be bled; I won't, I won't be bled. Very well, then, don't be bled. I am not going to bleed you, but to speak to you. Have patience to hear what I am about to say. I gently took his hand, and having felt his pulse a long time, said, —, your pulse beats very violently; it is as large and as strong as a man's. I put my hand upon his breast—Heavens! what a violent beating there is here! Does not your breast pain you? And your forehead, it is as hot as fever can

make it. See, how you breathe ! You are breathing seventy times a minute, which is fifty times in each minute more than you ought to breathe—equal to three thousand times in an hour more than is right or safe. Your pulse is one hundred and forty every minute—a great excess. It seems to me that you can with difficulty breathe at all ; and when the cough comes, it is almost enough to suffocate you. Do you understand all this, sir ? let me explain it. Listen ; your blood is excessively heated—and this pulse is produced by that hot blood, which flies under my fingers with the swiftness of an arrow, at every beat of your heart. When your heart pulsates, it sends out a spout of hot blood to your arm, to your foot ; some to your head, to make it ache and burn, and some to your breast, where the lungs are. Now those lungs get too great a share ; they have so much, that at this moment they are filled, choked, and red as blood. They are so overloaded, that they hardly serve you to breathe with, and soon they will be jammed so full, that they will no longer do it—and *then* you must die.

Now here am I, the physician, appointed to say what ought to be done to save you, if that be possible ; and I have said that you ought to be—I won’t, I won’t be bled. Very well, don’t be bled,—but let me talk to you. If you should let me take a cupful of blood from your arm, I’ll tell you what would happen. You would breathe only thirty, instead of seventy, times a minute ; your heart would beat more gently and slowly, which would lessen the headache ; your lungs, instead of receiving the blood with so violent and jerking a force, would get it in cooler and softer streams : they would be less red, less choked. You would cough less, and more easily—once, perhaps, where you now have three or four turns. You would sleep ; and at length begin to get well of this terrible malady. Do you understand me ? Yes. What do you say, then ? am I, the physician, after saying what is needful, what is proper, to be told that you won’t be bled ? No, sir. Shall I bleed you ? Yes, sir. He put forth his arm, with as good

an understanding of my motives, and as full a reliance on the success, as I had. I bled him without a wince or the least fear on his part, and he was restored, who, I believe, would have otherwise died the death.

Let no man tell me, after this exposition, made to a sick and strangling child, which he thoroughly comprehended, that the people cannot be made to understand us. On the contrary, I shall contend that it is easy to inform them well of much that they ought to know, and which, once known, will teach them to despise and detect the impostors by whom they are now misled, mistaking them for us.

It has been the habit of my professional life to conceal nothing of my art from the patient, when I found any occasion to explain; and where I have best succeeded in imparting information, I have found the most willing obedience to my directions. Take your pencil and your tablets, and with diagrams and in plain language make yourselves understood. Make them understand that you know what you do, and what you desire to do, and that your processes are founded in accurate information. Do not be misunderstood for what you are not.

The power of your art will be sometimes made manifest in a more public manner. Your daily work, like that of the great exemplar of morals, will be to go about doing good. And how many sad thoughts are dispelled by your cheerful smile, how many hearts made to leap up into hope and gladness again, when you shall say hope—hope yet on. How many wounded, broken spirits of parents and children to be healed when you shall say—The storm is past, and all the clouds that hovered upon your house, have given place to the beaming sun of peace and joy, and rescued life and fortune. How many tears shall you dry up—fountains of them; bitter fountains, that, but for your ministry, had welled up 'till the last throb of the aching heart. These are your silent, your unseen ministrations. But a high public duty awaits you, when you shall have become established, that men shall begin every where to

turn their eyes towards you, as a man of wisdom and knowledge. Even the state shall take occasion to be advised by you. She has rendered you, by her law, an official person. She commissioned us to inquire into your pretensions and to give you her diploma, under her authority, and she will call you into her courts if she please, when at a loss to decide certain questions affecting the fortune, reputation, or life of a citizen. She will appeal to you, to say to her juries what is truth, what is fact in this case. Here is a deep and mysterious tragedy. In this case of medical jurisprudence which it is your province to comprehend, tell us what is truth, what is right? What are the doctrines of physicians as to cases like this?

In entering the august presence, where justice sits enthroned, with the scales and the sword in her hands you will be surrounded with crowds of eager faces, bending forwards to catch the least sound of your voice, and watch the possible emotions that may gather upon your brows.

Beneath you, cowering, trodden into the ashes of abasement, his head bowed upon his aching breast, heavy with grief and shame and bereavement, sits a fellow creature, at the bar, on the trial of his life. The heavy hand of his Maker hath smote him sore, that pitiable man; a deep and painful tragedy has been wrought by his hand, and the hue and the cry have followed him up hither, to claim, where now alone it can be found, the appeal to God and his country. Kill him, kill him; cut him off, cut him off from amongst us, is the cry of the people. And what shall the state do? Shall it command the grave to be opened before his eyes, and he, a living man, to send him scared, unprepared, horror stricken, hurried from the *warm* precincts of the cheerful day, to dwell in the damp, and lonely, and infamous grave, on whose brink he stanus? The learned counsel presses the accusation with all the power of eloquence, and the wiles of art. The facts are clear, and the prisoner is as one lost. Upon the other side, the advocate calmly, and with patient skill unravels every

tangled thread of the transaction. He tells the whole story of the prisoner's life, and admits and paints the cruel event in the full strength of its terribleness. He points out the nature of the law of the case, but—and here is our power—he draws from the rich resources of our science the sure means of safety for the client; resources existing nowhere else, yet so powerful, so convincing, so applicable, that the hearts of the jury are seen to be touched, and their judgment already won, before the pleading is over, or a witness called on the part of the pannel. A deep and profound conviction hath settled down upon your mind that the prisoner is unfortunate, not guilty; most unhappy but most guiltless. This is a medical conviction. You know the truth in the case as you know it in a fever or in any inflammation. You are commanded to say to the jury what you know upon the subject before them, and you speak, under the sanction of an oath, the truth for weal or for woe. Your knowledge of the physical and moral character of the accused; his habits in sickness, all his intellectual propensities, furnish the means of illustrating a great truth relative to the nature and disorders of the will. The calm, dispassionate voice of Mr. Esquirol, the touching appeals of Georget, and the arguments of Pritchard and Erskine, are poured into the listening ears of the jury, and then that great crowd, and the jury themselves, and all those that cried out kill him—slay him—cut him off, with one consent approve of the verdict, which sets the prisoner free, and bids his wife and his trembling children go in peace. The dark stain of the gibbet shall not attaint the innocent boys nor she be left to her widowhood and shame.

Let men say, if they will, that your medical testimony has enlarged the murderer, that you have weakened the bonds of the social compact, and cheated the gallows of its due.

Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it—rest you content with the triumph of truth. Oh, magna est veritas, et prævalebit,—the power of truth, of medical

truth, could operate so miraculous a change in the minds of the people who came up crying, kill him, kill him; but now lo! they clap their hands for joy, that the power of truth hath saved him. .

Pardon, I again entreat, this digression, into which I have been enticed by my admiration for those eminent physicians of France, and England, and Germany, who have so greatly contributed to elucidate the frequent irresponsibility of the human will, in circumstances wherein formerly the victim of hallucinations and irresistible impulses, was treated like the wilful, and desperate, and malicious felon.

I have spoken to you of the power of our art. Let me now ask your attention to its obligations.

The first and greatest is that which I hope has prompted you, gentlemen of the class, to take so great pains, as to come up here from distant States to this seat of the medical sciences. It is to master it, that you may become fully equal to its highest claims. This you will never do leisurely—playfully. No man can master it without toil, and much toil.

O βιος βραχὺς η δε τεκνη μαχρη ο δε καιρος οξυς are the words of Hippocrates, introductory to his aphorisms; and if he found life short for the mastering of the learning of his early day, what must be its comparative brevity now? It is true, as he says, that art is long, and the opportunity for seizing it swiftly gone. You will make haste, then, to seize the precious moments, when it is presented to your hands, to take the good gifts, nor lose the headlong occasion, which may never return. Here, gentlemen, within these walls, I dare to say the words—for the promise has been made to you by my colleagues—here will be spread out for you a rich feast of reason,—here will be the whole vast comprehension of the chemical sciences, brought within the compass of a course of Lectures, by my learned friend the Professor. The entire range of the *materia medica*, gathered from many sunny isles, many distant coasts, many lofty Cor-

dilleras, dug from the mine and wrested from the sea, all that the sun has ripened with his ray, and all that the three kingdoms of nature have contributed of balm for our suffering race ; it shall be brought here, and shown to you with the order and accuracy of an account posted up to the last hour. The terrible energy of the surgeon, and the triumphs of that art will be manifested to you. All the deep investigations that have brought to light the principles of life in ages past, and in present time, will be set before your delighted view. The anatomical analysis of the human body, will be done so clearly, so understandingly, in your sight, that while you sit there on you seats, you shall seem to unlock every secret cabinet where the treasures of life lie hidden : and then shall come another instructor to tell you how to make all these things work together for the good of men. I, too, gentlemen, hope to have an humble share in this pleasing labour ; I shall teach you to know, and, perchance, to see, the nucleated nucleus of the human microcosm. I can demonstrate to you the mother-cells of the germ, which under the miraculous potency of the spirit of life, from an invisible speck, the three thousandth of an inch in diameter, rises and expands, and unrolls the nervous, and the mucous, and the vascular systems, granule upon granule, cell upon cell, organ upon organ, until—amazing work—it is ushered into the light of the world, and impressed with the signet of immortality. In doing this I shall expose to you in the clearest manner that I am able, all the steps of development, the phenomena and laws of gestation, the nature of labour in every variety, with the means of conducting it to a safe conclusion ; I shall illustrate the subject by all the means within my power, whether of memory, or reason, or art.

Now is the time to master the principles of the profession, to which you are devoted. When in full possession of those principles, you will find it not very difficult to attain the knowledge of the numerous details of their application. We propose to teach you medicine as it is known to-day. You

cannot dare to trifle along the road, and dally in the path. The people every where begin to appreciate education. The country is fast filling with bright spirits who have made themselves familiar with whatsoever has been achieved of late years; whose ears have drank in the words of the great men of Germany, and France, and Great Britain. Take heed—take heed that they leave you not far behind. Work well now. The habit of labour established in early life will grow with its indulgence—for learning hath this good quality, that it never satiates, that it never palls upon the appetite, but ever craves greater and yet richer acquisitions to press further outwards the dark zone that bounds the bright circle of knowledge. I urge you to labour because you are observed, you are marked men.

Do you expect, upon returning to your several places of abode, to be private citizens any more? Vain expectation—you will have become public characters, and must live under the eye of the public, who will measure your intelligence by a high standard; every action will be noted, and your conversation will be repeated from mouth to mouth. You must not be idlers—you must make progress in all that is good. Stand still, but still, and you are left far behind. Swim on the flood of improvement, or you are cast on the shore among the useless rubbish that the stream bears on its bosom, and scorns to float to the ocean. Will you dare to enter the chambers of the sick with a farrago of poisons in your hand—for medicines are poisons except when used with knowledge? Will you stand up before a court and jury to be mercilessly quizzed by a lawyer, or cast shame upon our art whose banner you pretend to uphold? Study then, bend to the toil—away every thought of pleasure—place in due order in the mind every new acquisition, store up the great truths and unerring principles that shall be able to come at your bidding, and like revelations from on high, teach you what is duty in the most trying scenes of your life. Do you seek the diploma—you must be questioned first. No, not the diploma, not the testimonial—it is truth

you seek—the knowledge, and the administration of the knowledge that shall establish you in worthy fellowship in that good society in which are comprehended all learned, benign, upright physicians.

Your station is one of the most confidential character. Men and women, too, will open to you the secret griefs and shames that oppress them—where is honour if you betray them ?

You will be often tempted to desert the path of duty under some pretence of doing good. Never do evil that good may come. Have a care least you bring ruin on yourselves and discredit on all the brethren. The occasions to err are named legion. Be temperate—without reproach—charitable. Charity is a grace to all men; to the physician indispensable: as a physician, without it, though you “may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though you may have the gift of prophecy, and though you may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though you may have faith that you would remove mountains, you are nothing, you are become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

Such are the obligations that are laid upon each and every one of you now—this day.

How great are the advantages that those of you may reap who may be enabled successfully to cultivate the opportunities of improving in knowledge, both theoretic and practical!

The rewards of labour are sure, if not large. The fees of the physician are the Honoraria—the honourable rewards for intellectual labour. Take a just view of the nature and variety of this compensation. Values are determinate; you cannot be paid with a price; there is no tariff to be adjusted for health, nor an ad valorem for exemption from death. Hence, when, at a word and a glance, you save [one] from threatened dissolution, and he recognizes your services by a reward, it is the Honorarium—the testimonial of his gratitude, not the measure of your service; for that is immeasurable. Now, when he presents you with a fee

proportioned to his ability, you should accept it,—an humble one from the poor, and a richer one from the rich. It is convenient and proper to have some rule as a general means of direction, and for the information of the people ; but to measure all men by that rule is to be cruel as Procrustes. Must I say it ? yes. Our profession is not in general the road to wealth ; it is a sure one to competency. If it be riches you seek, make haste to seek them by some other action. You may find the golden prize in commerce, in the arts—even in agriculture. No ; your business in the world is one of charity. You must never turn a deaf ear to the cry of the poor. When you shall have become distinguished as practitioners, the poor will look upon you as well as the rich. A word—a kind word—ah ! what a consolation to the distressed and humble poor, from a rich and eminent physician ! What a treasure of balm poured into the wounds of those who, alas ! have few resources save in tears and silence !

And, lastly, among the advantages you are destined to enjoy, among the most precious will be the love and affection of the people with whom you will be brought into contact and union. Should you become what our hopes fore-show, the children will climb your knees, and, as some good pastor—or time-honoured curé—your presence will be hailed as that of a friend, a member, a counsellor of the family. You will, perhaps, have witnessed the birth of every one of them, and as years roll on, those little forms which, when you first saw them, were like flower-buds unfolding on the parent stem, they will have become strong men, and ready to take your place on the stage of action; but they will venerate and respect you ; and their children will be as your children ; and if God grant you length of days, then, “in the days when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few ; and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened ; when the almond tree shall flourish, or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the pitcher be

broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern ;” they will love to guide your aged feet by the wayside, or in the fields ; and they will hasten to greet you reverently, and with joy, as you shall come to the vine-covered porches of the doors where, in by-gone years, you sat with their fathers and friends, and tell them of the rise of their race and its fortunes ; and, perchance, with fervent memory, speak to them of the beauty and holiness of those lovely ones, who, amidst tears and weeping, and with long remembered love, were early snatched from the temptations and the cares of this, to you, now weary, weary, weary world.

